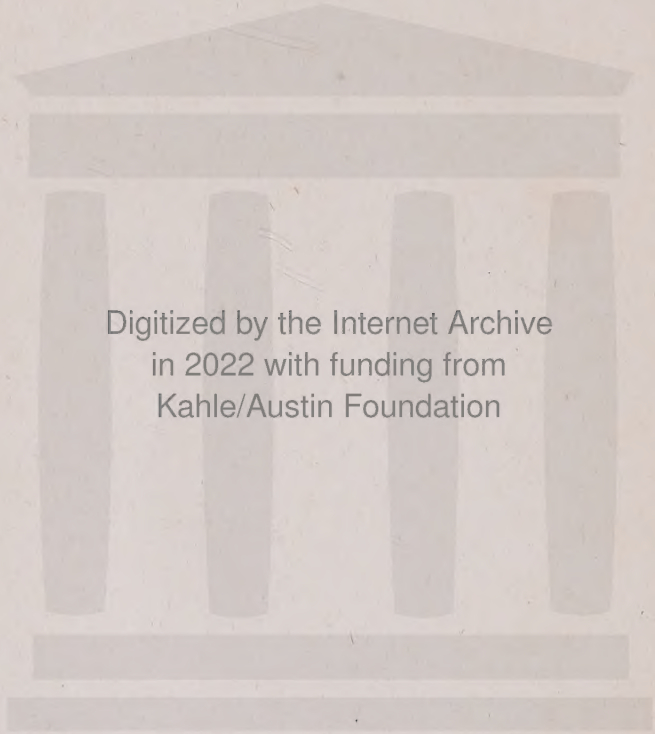
THE FOURTH PHYSICIAN

A Christmas Story

MONTGOMERY PICKETT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THE FOURTH PHYSICIAN

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Orange City =

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"Ob cou'se dere am all sohts ob doctahs," Hilary explained.

[Page 17

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BY

MONTGOMERY PICKETT

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TO ONE WHO WATCHED BY NIGHT

The Fourth Physician

I

WHEN CALENDAR BEDFORD reached the age of sixty, it was published widely that he had retired from business; he had done more than that—he had quit. His was not the usual case of a year of tiresome globe trotting followed by a summer consecrated to golf, then into the harness again. He had something to do.

Here and there may be found a man who knows how to round out his life ripely, maturely, as October rather than December should complete the year. Bedford had discovered that the City of Leisure is more absorbing than the City of Industry, if one but knows the game. It was all simple enough: most of the so-called "classes" of society might be found within walking distance of

his home on the Drive. Just now he was back in Virginia — at least, Hilary Brooks, the negro house-servant he had brought North with him, mourned him as there. It was the first Christmas Eve in forty years that he and "Marse Calendah" had not spent together, and he hoped it would be the last. All morning the old man had been decorating the living-room with holly and balsam boughs, not forgetting to add a spray of mistletoe where suitable head-room could be had. Now that he had nearly finished, doubts arose in his mind as to whether his efforts were worth while. True, "Little Miss," otherwise Elizabeth Bedford, had remained at home, but even that left the question debatable.

He was a real man, this aged negro, with very dark skin and snow-white hair. If asked his age, he was likely to answer evasively, and then to recall an event that dignified his childhood, when "jes' foh er

minute" he had been permitted to hold in his little black arms the new master of the Bedford house, all done up in long, white baby clothes. As he could remember nothing that had happened prior to that impressive occasion it was clear to him that he must have been about five years older than Marse Calendah and hence "gwine on ter sebenty now." Loyalty and devotion were qualities that Bedford gave and accepted without much thought—they were requisite to friendship. It was his childlike and boundless faith, underlying a kindly, sunny nature that made him love his former slave.

Everybody else, including her father, realized that Elizabeth had become a young woman,—to Hilary she remained "ouah mothahless little girl." On this particular afternoon, as she stepped into the living-room he was humming softly an old melody, for all of his regret that the head of the family had seen fit to absent himself at the most

important time of the year. He was putting "de finishin' teches" on his morning's work.

"It is lovely, Uncle Hilary!" she commented, glancing around approvingly. "How did you manage it so quickly?"

"Old niggah step lively, Chris'mus-time! Ah'se had er lot ob dealin's wid Santy Claus!" He ascended the step-ladder slowly and straightened a cluster of mistletoe hanging from the chandelier. His face took on a shade of anxiety as he looked down upon Elizabeth, who had seated herself at a desk. When presently she glanced up, he was careful to resume his most cheerful expression.

"Ah'se of'en wondahed whah dis heah mistletoe deribe hits title—mos' likely hits name' foh some ob ouah old famblies back in Virginny! Ef sech de case, dat fambly sho'ly share in de honah ob de gran' ole State!"

Elizabeth smiled encouragingly.

"Ef Ah hadn't been er ministah ob de

Gawspil foh ser many yeahs, an' on dat ercount s'posed ter *know* ever'thing, Ah suttinly would er arsked befo' dis!"

"Why don't you ask now?"

"Does you know whah hit deribe hits name?" he inquired with caution.

"No, Uncle Hilary," she admitted laughingly, "I've often wondered myself."

"Dat's de way hit go!" And he shook his head in simulated discouragement. "When er pusson ob age an' 'sperience *do* humiliate hisse'f by arskin' questions, he don' nevah learn nuffin!" He patted the mistletoe caressingly and descended. Elizabeth was standing at the fireplace in meditation. "Ah'se gittin' pow'ful oneasy Marse Calendah ain' gwine be heah in time ter greet Ole Kris ter-night!"

"Did I tell you that I wrote him not to hurry back? I wanted him to stay over Christmas at the old home."

"Foh de Lawd' sake!" His voice was

full of respectful indignation. "You sho'ly ain' gone an' done *dat!*"

"Yes, I did!"

"Ah kin see right heah, ain' gwine be no Chris'mus in dis house."

She took a telegram from the mantel.

"Here is his answer. You may read it." She offered him the yellow slip, but clearly he did not intend to take it. "Oh, forgive me, Uncle Hilary — I forgot you don't *like* to read telegrams!"

"No'm, Ah don' jes' hanker arfter 'em. Nevah did hab no luck wid tel'grams. Las' one Ah projec' wid, Marse Calendah han' me ter read ovah forty yeah ergo. When Ah discover nex' day hit wah de ordah foh him ter go ter de front wid his regiment, Ah hab de same feelin' ob mis'ry dat come ter me jes' now wid yo' 'nouncement he ain' gwine be heah foh Chris'mus! What Marse Calendah 'low in dat tel'gram?"

"He 's coming back this afternoon!"

"De Lawd be praise'! Ole niggah begin be 'fraid all dem derangements you been makin' wah foh dat doctah-man 'stead ob Marse Calendah."

"How did you know that Dr. Shepherd is expected here this afternoon?" she asked, surprised.

Hilary chuckled.

"Ah did n't, but Ah reckon ole niggah know hit *now!* No'm, Ah don' nevah pestah mahse'f readin' no tel'grams! De tel'foam soun' mo' intel'gent."

She laughed consciously at the trap he had led her into.

"Uncle Hilary, I'm afraid you won't ever settle down into a dignified man."

Vastly tickled, he changed the subject.

"How you like dat mistletoe?"

"It is lovely — all of it! But I have just come from a poor, little dying girl over in

the Settlement District. Dr. Warren found her this morning, too late to save her life."

"Too late? Sho'ly not!"

"He does n't expect her to live through the night."

"De po' chile!" His voice was full of the deepest sympathy. "An' Ah 'spose dey been makin' Chris'mus prep'rations foh her, too!"

"No; they do not have very much Christmas in homes like hers. She has n't a father, and her mother is poor."

"How ole you say she is?"

"About five."

"No Chris'mus-tree, nor nuffin?"

"There was n't even food in the house when Dr. Warren got there."

"Whah she lib', Little Miss?"

"In the same block as the Mission Church."

"De church Marse Calendah gib de chime ob bells ter?"

"Yes."

"Hit sho'ly can't be de chile you an' me tooken de Chris'mus things ter las' yeah?"

Elizabeth nodded her head.

"You 'membah how she clumb up onto mah knee, an' put dem baby fingahs 'gainst dese ole black cheeks ob mine?"

"I — I thought of it to-day."

"Yassum; she put dem little han's on mah face, an' say, sweet an' trus'ful-like," and he tenderly imitated the child voice, "'Ah knows who oo is! *Oo* is Ole Santy! An' oo is tum down 'ittle chillun's chimblies ser much oo han's an' face is full ob soot!'"

"Poor, baby fingers!"

"De onliest chile Ah is helt in mah ahms foh many er yeah!" His gentle old face took on a purposeful look that Elizabeth had seen before. "We ain' gwine ter let her die, is we, Little Miss?"

"Oh, I hope not!"

"Good Book say we gotter considah' de

po' an' needy as well as de lilies ob de fiel', but when Ah heahs ob er case like dis, Ah is suah we considahs de lilies ob de fiel' too much!"

"I think so — and that is true of *us!* Look at all our beautiful Christmas things — we with no children in the house!"

"You is de chile ob dis house — de onliest one we got lef'! Marse Calendah an' me nevah got ovah 'membahin' dat!"

Elizabeth, touched by his devotion, decided to take him into her confidence, knowing that no one was worthier.

"You were speaking of Dr. Shepherd," she ventured, glancing at the mistletoe with coloring cheeks. "Sometimes when he is here, I can't help feeling that I am keeping him from some poor, suffering child!"

Without understanding why, Hilary began to bristle.

"Wheddah Doctah Shepherd am heah er somewhah else, de kine ob chillun *he* 'tends

ain' gwinter suffah! He got strickly er *obsclusive* practice — 'mongst de rich an' pow'ful, you know."

"Yes, I know," she admitted, and the old man felt the sadness in her heart.

"Ob cou'se dere am all sohts ob doctahs," Hilary explained quite cheerfully. "Ah'se hadder lot ob dealin's wid 'em! Comin' home on de street-car de uddah night, Ah heah er life-assuhance agent tellin' how he got er tip dat suttin doctah gwine take out er polercy on his own life. Same ebenin' he call on de doctah wid de idea ob gittin' de business. What you think dat feesician done?"

"I could never guess."

"Well, he lis'en few minutes, an' den he 'low he don' want no life-assuhance. 'Lemme see yo' tongue!' he say ter de agent. 'Nuffin de mattah wid mah *tongue!*' de agent explain, thinkin' de doctah wah joshin' him. How-some-evah he done as he wah tole, an' den dat doctah ups an' charges de

po' man two dollahs foh one orfice consolation!"

"Don't you mean an office consultation?" Elizabeth inquired, laughing merrily.

Hilary became solemn.

"You 'spose dat wah what he mean? Ef hit wah, den you gone an' tooken de whole humorousness outer dat story!"

"I'd be sorry to do that!"

"De whole p'int ob de joke is wondahin' whah de life-assuhance man got any consolation outer de transaction."

"But, as you say, all doctors are not alike," Elizabeth reminded him.

"No'm, bless de Lawd, dey ain't! Dere's ole Doctah Fred'rick, back in Hanovah County. One day, Sistah Louisy Rice dat uster lib in de cabin down de road from us, come bu'stin' in wid de news dat little 'Mericky Jane, her gran'chile, wah ver' sick, an' she want me ter pray foh her. Dat wah when Ah foller preachin' steady, you undahstan'?"

"Yes."

"Ah say ter Sistah Louisy, p'inted-like, 'Sistah,' Ah say, 'Ain't dat chile got no doctah?' She answah dat she *got* er doctah, but he ask er mighty lot ob questions 'bout whah he gwinter git his money — dat's why she want me ter pray!"

"What did you do?"

"Ah respon' dat Ah gwinter light out ter town foh Doctah Fred'rick, an' Ah'd do sech prayin' as come handy on de road. Dis happen on er Thanksgibin' Day, an' when Ah gets dar, de doctah jes' settin' down ter dinnah. He tooken one sor'ful look at de roas' turkey, grabs de little pill-satchel he allus carry, an' hurry right out. Ten mile in de rain, ovah Virginny roads! You know what dat mean."

"I surely do!"

"When we come ter de ford through Lickin' Crick, fu'st thing we know, hoss an' buggy swep' right out from undah us, an'

down de swollen stream! We land, ob cou'se, on de wrong side, an' as he gathah his senses back, de doctah 'low he jes' gotter get ter dat little sick niggah! So he jump in an' swum 'cross, hangin' onter de pill-satchel all de time. Houah later when we show up at Sistah Louisy's cabin, he mos' tuckered out! What you think we fine?"

"What?" Elizabeth asked with interest, the story having been a favorite one since childhood.

"Ole Sistah Louisy standin' in de do', her big, shiny eyes full ob gladness. 'Mericky Jane much better!' she cry. 'Pahson, yo' prayah suttinly been heeard!' Ah draw mahse'f up an' respon' dat Doctah Fred'rick been doin' de best prayin' in de worl', an' Ah reckon dat wah what turn de trick. You see, Little Miss, fervent prayah 'vaileth much. Ah is of'en observe dat nuffin is ser strong in sickness er health, as er good prayah wid de right perpo'tion ob effoht behine hit!"

II

HER father's absence had increased Elizabeth's responsibilities, and explained how she happened to forget that little Jeannette would be looking for Santy Claus — the same soot-covered one who had delighted her heart the Christmas before. In fact, it was Hilary's beaming, black face as he served breakfast that morning that reminded her of the child. They discussed various gifts before she decided to go personally and find out what would bring the most happiness, the most comfort.

It was shortly after ten o'clock when she stepped from a car at Hull House and walked east on Ewing Street past the Juvenile Court to where the Dante School stood calm and dignified in the social inferno, the human chaos that surrounded it. Familiar as she was with the district, it was not easy

to find Mary Walker's home. She paused in front of a vacant lot that made her think of a sunken garden of ashes. Here and there stood heavy coal wagons laid up for the holidays, their harsh, ugly lines softened by the snow. A half-dozen dark-eyed boys had built a crackling fire in a battered section of rusty iron smokestack discarded years before; their fuel consisted of dried banana stalks that had been permitted to contribute to the pestilential conditions of the neighborhood the summer before. The heavy snowflakes fell upon the heated metal with sharp, vicious hisses, and the youngsters shouted and danced as primitive boys must have done in the world's first snowstorm. Across the street stood a house with cheap, pretentious lace curtains caught back in the middle and framing a huge salted fish, advertising to the world that commerce was not neglected in that home. A squat, serious-faced lad with absurdly bowed legs, came trudging along

the slippery sidewalk carrying a babe whom kindly Nature intended to bask in the sunlight of the Mediterranean. Elizabeth asked in Italian if he could tell her where Mrs. Walker lived. The clear, well-formed English in which he replied, reflected credit upon the Dante School, as he gave her directions which soon brought her to a wretched house that listed sharply leeward and seemed in imminent danger of capsizing. The lower floor was occupied by a saloon, and in one of the windows here the noble countenance of Tolstoi shared honors with the coarse features of a local candidate in the last election. A rickety stair ran up one side of the building to a crazy gallery upon which the upper tenements opened. It was in this structure that Mary Walker rented the two miserable rooms she called her home.

Elizabeth knocked, and while waiting at the door a funeral procession passed. There were several rather stylish carriages — in one

a little white casket almost covered by a bunch of blood-red roses frozen stiff in the biting air. One ramshackle automobile coughed along in the rear as if sick unto death. She watched it with apprehension, but it negotiated the corner safely and disappeared in the smoke and snow.

Dr. Warren opened the door. Elizabeth knew him and his work, and was not surprised when she saw his sturdy, plainly clad figure before her.

"How do you do, Miss Bedford?" he asked, his fine young face lighting up.

"Good-morning, Doctor!" she replied cordially.

"Come in out of the cold — although it is not much warmer inside." She entered and he closed the door. "How did you know about her?" he asked.

"Know about her — about whom?"

"Little Jeannette. She is very ill." He

poked dexterously at the newly kindled fire in the cook-stove that was filling the room with the fragrant odor of pine. "I learned this morning that she was sick and came over as soon as I could."

"You are not alarmed about her?"

"Frankly, I am. In fact, I don't see how she can recover. Such cases are hard to save, over here. Everything is against her. There was no fire when I arrived. Her poor, distracted mother was breaking up for fuel an old trunk that must have had memories for her. She got the stove started while I did what I could for the child."

"Is there plenty of fuel now?"

"Yes. I 'phoned over to the House from the saloon downstairs. There is also food and medicine. One of the most discouraging features of the case is that Mrs. Walker has made up her mind that the child will die. I have sometimes noticed that mothers of al-

most elementary intelligence seem to know when a child is fatally ill. That is particularly true in this part of the city."

"Perhaps it is because so many children die over here," she suggested.

"Hardly, Miss Bedford. We are having better success each year. It may sound unprofessional to you, but often I am forced to consider these uncanny intuitions of which I speak."

"There must be something I can do for them. May I go in?" She indicated the door of the inner room.

"Yes, if you wish. A visiting nurse has come, and is with the child. She is resting easier, and in the early afternoon we will know more of her chances of recovery. Meanwhile there are other places I must go." He filled the stove with coal and adjusted the drafts. Then, holding his hat, he smiled gravely. "A Merry Christmas to you, Miss Bedford!"

She offered her hand.

"It is happiness I am wishing for you, Dr. Warren—you who bring so much to others!"

"I'm not so sure about that! But this work appeals to me. I wouldn't know how to act anywhere else."

When he had gone, Elizabeth began straightening up the poor, squalid room that contained barely the necessaries of life. It served as kitchen, eating and living room combined. Besides the stove now roaring valiantly as the result of Warren's expert ministrations there was a sewing-machine such as piece-workers use, a table, and several chairs. These she noticed in a casual way. Her deep, womanly sympathy was centred in the adjoining room where a child lay suffering.

III

THROUGHOUT their association of a lifetime, Calendar Bedford never thought of Hilary as a servant, but always as a friend. Conditions not of his making, which he accepted as his fathers had done before him, had raised a social barrier between them; neither made any effort to remove it, satisfied in knowing that their friendship was unaffected by circumstances which made one the master, the other a servant. It was to this same friend and slave that Bedford had entrusted the safety of the women and children of his household, and incidentally his worldly goods, when he led his regiment away from the Valley of Virginia in the early days of the Civil War. And no soldier of his command had been more faithful to his cause than this devoted negro who served him still.

Elizabeth was in her first year at college

when her mother died, and these two white-haired men, one of whom loved the dead woman as a rose is loved, the other as a star might be, tightened up the bands of affection and comforted one another. The same rich sympathy that had buoyed up the drifting soul of his master during that tragic time now began to rise in Hilary's heart as Elizabeth finished telling what she knew of the stricken child. His nimble brain was already planning, when Dr. Warren called.

"I had hoped to find Dr. Shepherd," he explained, glancing about the room in disappointment. "I was informed by his office that he might be here."

"I expect him later in the afternoon," Miss Bedford replied. "How is little Jeannette?"

"When I returned after seeing you, I found her condition grave. I have done all I can. There is only one man who can save her now."

"You mean Dr. Shepherd?"

"Yes. Unless he can be induced to go to her and to administer his new discovery, the child will die before midnight."

"We must ask him to go."

"That is what brings me here."

"Surely he will!"

Dr. Warren did not miss the doubt that her confident words were intended to conceal.

"I hope so, Miss Bedford. You know how busy he is. In other cases brought to his attention—"

"Then you have brought similar cases to him," she interrupted, "and he did not see them?"

"There are many demands upon his time, you know."

"He is about to announce his wonderful discovery—to give it to the world!"

Warren bowed.

"I must not linger. He may be at the

Children's Hospital; he has a clinic there about this hour."

"Why not telephone him?"

"It would be of no use. My only chance of inducing him to go, is by personal persuasion. You see, I have known him a long time."

Her eyes danced.

"You have! Oh, tell me what was he like as a boy?"

The slum doctor paused thoughtfully. Even the eager young woman noticed the color deepen in his face. He was absorbed in a diagnosis that concerned his own heart as well as hers. She wondered at his delay in replying, and attributed it to anxiety for the child.

"It is hard to answer a question like that," he finally said, "but his was one of the most beautiful natures I ever knew. I used to wonder if there was any limitation to his courage or his gentleness. We used to tell

him that he was as happy in patching up a girl's broken toy as he was in thrashing the boy who broke it."

"Beautiful!" And one might have fancied from her manner that she herself was the little girl whose cherished doll and whose broken heart had both been mended.

"In fact," Warren continued, with exactness, "Dr. Shepherd was everything as a boy that he should be now as a man."

She stiffened perceptibly, and her expression changed.

"I—I am not quite sure that I understand you, Dr. Warren."

The physician's diagnosis was complete. Sacrifice was not unknown to him, and his course lay clear.

"What I mean is this, Miss Bedford. I can't help feeling that Dr. Shepherd has not actually changed a great deal. Somewhere under all the fashionable rubbish he affects,

his old nature lies dormant. A man can't change that much, you know!"

"Oh, I'm so glad you think that—I do, too!"

"If I didn't have a part of the old faith left, I wouldn't be seeking him now. Good-bye!"

With the extra touch of ceremony reserved for those whom he particularly admired, Hilary escorted Dr. Warren to the door.

"Dere's er pow'ful lot ob doctahs in de worl'," he observed innocently, upon his return. "An' sech dif'rent kines ob 'em, too!"

He was explaining how "Doctah Fred'rick, ob Hanovah County," would conduct a case like little Jeannette's, when a tall, aristocratic man, about sixty-five, appeared in the doorway, where he stood for a moment as if blessing the friendship that the beautiful young woman had inherited for the

black man he had always loved. Hilary saw him first, and laughed as gleefully as a lad.

"Ah jes' wish you'd *look!*"

Elizabeth sprang to her feet, and was met by the man at the door, who took her in his arms.

"You see I'm back to meet Santy!" His voice was low and rich and glad. He took Hilary's hand and wrung it warmly. "How d'y do, Hilary?"

"Ah'se jes' mod'rate, Bless de Lawd, Marse Calendah!" he answered. No matter how happy he was, it never seemed quite delicate to boast about it. "Ah hope you *is,* sah?"

"Is what—'jes' mod'rate'? Oh, I'm more than that! It was a beautiful visit! I left everybody well, and the old place hasn't changed since we were there." He inspected the decorations approvingly. "Full as ever of Christmas spirit, you two. Whose

master hand is responsible for all this beauty?"

Hilary chuckled.

"Jes' er few extra teches, sah, in honah ob de prod'gal's return! Ob cou'se you undahstan's," he explained in some confusion, "you ain' 'zactly er prod'gal!"

"Whatever I happen to be, I'm not going back home alone any more. Next Christmas we'll all go!" He turned to Elizabeth now. "You and Hilary and I—and Livingston?"

"Do you mean Dr. Shepherd?"

Hilary smiled knowingly.

"Ah'll jes' make suah yo' rooms is ready, sah!" He took his master's bag and started out. "Lawd! Lawd! Dese evahlastin' doctah-men!"

Elizabeth was careful not to appear confused.

"Dr. Shepherd is coming this afternoon."

"Good! He 's very welcome!"

"I know you feel kindly toward him, Father, but—"

"Let's see about this, now!" Bedford interrupted with his customary directness. "Tell your old Dad if anything is troubling you!"

"There is something I want to tell you, but I don't seem to know just what it is."

"Don't you care for him, my dear?"

"You know I do!"

"Perhaps he doesn't care for you!" he suggested teasingly.

"That's just what it is!" she replied solemnly. "I'm sure he likes me, but it is his horrid old profession that stands between us!"

Bedford realized how unfortunate it would be if he laughed outright as he wanted to.

"I've often noticed that young people in love—deeply in love, you understand—expect more than—er—that is to say—go on, my child."

"I don't know what it is, exactly. Old-fashioned people used to call it a 'chilling mist' or something of the sort, and that is about as near as I can describe it. And it is always there!" she added positively.

"Go on," he suggested with infinite patience. "Not a symptom missing!"

"You needn't laugh at me, Dad! I tell you it *is* his profession! And he loves it better than he could ever love me!"

"You've reached the loves-his-work stage —that's all! It is that quality which has made him—a young man, but a strong man —in his own great world!" He was serious now. "It is precisely that which makes him worthy of you."

"Do you suppose it is?" she asked, greatly comforted.

"Certainly! Even his good fortune in winning you mustn't make him forget a physician's duty."

"But it isn't his duty at all that I refer

to!" she declared stoutly. "It is his professional standing, reputation — his professional *everything* — and then, perhaps, his love for me!"

"Nonsense!" He was grinning broadly now. "Let's look at the other side of it."

"The other side of what?"

"Why, this misty business you are worrying about! I can see Livingston Shepherd right now before his well-worn mirror, putting 'de finishin' teches,' as Hilary would say, to his scientifically correct toilet!" He pretended to be looking into the distance. "Note with what rare technique he is making an incision into his dove-colored four-in-hand with a scarf-pin!"

"Don't, Dad!" she begged.

"Suddenly his high brow is overcast with doubt and misgiving. 'Most distressing complication,' he cries. 'Just as I am sure about everything else this unfortunate misty business is clearly developed, and I've got to

recognize symptoms of her interest in something besides myself!'"

She laughed joyously.

"'Ah, yes!' he groans. 'She still visits those poor crippled children and brightens their dreary lives! She even serves tea from her grandmother's china service! I have got to discover a specific for all this, too!'" Then Bedford ceased to laugh, and took her tenderly in his arms. "There! There! Don't you see? Your mother felt as you do now when the war called me. Do you think she could have loved me as well if I had laid down my sword and remained at her side?"

"No, Dad, no!" She proudly regarded his military figure, still trim and erect, and his strong, gentle face. "You are good to set me right!"

IV

"YO' rooms is ready, Marse Calendah," Hilary announced from the doorway. "An' 'scuse me, sah, but 'pears like pow'ful funny odah am comin' outer yo' grip — although Ah don' think hit 's as bad as ef de bottle wah bu'st!"

"You old rascal," Bedford accused him fondly. "You could smell out that Hanover Bourbon all the way back to Virginia!"

"Am hit one ob de *big* bottles, sah?" It was important that this question be settled. "Er jes' one ob dem measly little quahts?"

"It is n't either. Only a pint, this time — and the last one, at that!"

"Ah 'membahs dat little runt!" Hilary asserted resentfully. "Hit wah de las' one Ah drap inter de pond de night Ah heeard dat Gen'el Butlah wah comin'! An' jes' as luck would hab it, dat fool Bline Tom mule

ob our'n what Gen'el Butlah's soldiers would n't oblige us by takin', he ups an' gits lost in de pond, bu'sted de jimmy-john dat hel' fibe whole gallons, an' misses de little insignificus pint you got in yo' grip! Luck suttinly am curious! But, ain' you hongry? What kin Ah git foh you, sah?"

"Nothing, thank you. I lunched on the train."

"We've laughed enough, now," Elizabeth announced, becoming serious. "I want to tell you about a sick child I visited this morning. Dr. Warren found her."

"Dr. Warren of the Settlement?"

"Yes, Father. She was very ill when he first saw her. And, oh, Daddy, there was neither medicine nor food in the house!"

The old story of human suffering was always new to him.

"Dr. Warren was here just before you came," she continued. "He has done all that he can, and is trying to find Dr. Shep-

herd. And do you know, they were boys together! The little girl is desperately ill of the disease for which Dr. Shepherd has discovered his wonderful specific."

"Have you told Livingston about the case?"

"No, Father."

"Why?"

"I found a similar case myself some time ago, and telephoned him about it. I understood him to promise to visit the child at once, but when I asked him about it later, he had forgotten to go."

"Had he not seen the child at all?"

"He explained that he was devoting so much time to the discovery, he was rarely able to see individual cases."

"Every case is an individual case."

"I was thinking of that when you came, and I can't help feeling that he does not care for children at all,—that it is merely professional prominence and fame which appeal

to him! However, I am going to do what I can to send him over to Dr. Warren's patient."

"Where does the child live?"

"Quite near the little Mission Church to which you gave the chimes last Christmas. I heard them again to-day. And I thought of you, and of her, as I listened to their notes of sweetness and cheer."

"You are very like her, my child!" For a moment neither spoke. "I am glad you had made up your mind to have Dr. Shepherd see the little girl over there."

"I have already made up my speech, too!" she told him girlishly. Then she became serious again. "I shall tell him that the saving of that precious life will be his Christmas gift to me!"

"That will fix him, if nothing else will! I can understand better now how you feel about his work. But you must be fair to him. He is much absorbed in his discovery,

but when once he has announced it, will have more time for other things."

It was the holiday season, and Colonel Bedford had much to tell of his visit. He had answered many questions about the old home, and was leaving the room when Hilary threw open the door for Dr. Shepherd. Many who knew this interesting gentleman insisted that his unusual personality and physical charm had much to do with his notable success as a specialist in children's diseases. In a measure this did him injustice; he was a worker as well as a thinker. At thirty-two there were few physicians in the great city who were better known, and none with a more enviable reputation in his specialty. Many a child's life had been spared through the instrumentality of his skill supported by indomitable courage and determination. And many a rich man paid richly for his service. All that he was, all that he had done, and all that he intended to do were

apparent in his face and manner as he entered Calendar Bedford's living-room.

"A Merry Christmas to you both!" he said, and to one who observed impartially it was as if words of great import were being worthily uttered.

Bedford took his hand cordially, and then surrendered it to his daughter.

"I was afraid I might not be fortunate enough to keep my engagement," Shepherd confessed with gracious candor.

"Doubtless you have many demands upon your time," his host answered politely.

"Rather more than usual, Colonel Bedford. I trust you had a pleasant stay in Virginia?"

"Delightful! Elizabeth and I were just planning to have you with us there, next Christmas."

"But, Father," his daughter ventured diffidently, "as charming as it is to anticipate Dr. Shepherd's visit next year, we must

not forget our claim upon him now. Dr. Shepherd, I was explaining to Father that I intended to ask you for a Christmas gift! Really and truly a Christmas gift for myself!"

"You'll ask it now, won't you?"

"Indeed I will! It is for a gift of your time. I learned only to-day that you are a friend of Dr. Warren who does so much for the poor people over in the Settlement."

"Warren? Dr. Warren?" the fashionable physician inquired. "So many doctors, you know!"

"Dr. Robert Warren. You knew him as a boy."

"Oh, *that* Warren!" He laughed indulgently. "Why, yes, I know him! We were classmates — in fact, roommates at college. What about him?"

"Father and I both know him. He was here this afternoon looking for you."

"Looking for me — here? Really, I do

not understand why Dr. Warren should be looking for me. Our work is so different, you know. It is probably something in connection with his fad. Bad thing for a physician!"

"What is his fad — may I inquire?" asked Elizabeth.

"Oh, slumming, mainly!" he answered with calculated indifference. "He has buried a rather unusual talent over in the West Side Graveyard, as we call it. Charity practice among unappreciative foreigners."

"I have rarely found them so."

"You will, sooner or later, when the novelty wears off. In my opinion, Dr. Warren has sacrificed himself."

"You are wrong about that, Livingston!" Bedford put in, with good-natured directness. "All wrong, my boy!"

"Indeed?" The distinguished young specialist was not accustomed to having his opinions disputed.

"Yes, entirely wrong. A few years ago, I might have agreed with you. I am a little late in getting around to it, but I am beginning to comprehend the good that men like Warren are doing."

"But the theory of it all is utterly fallacious, Colonel Bedford, and the practice worse! It is very hard to intelligently dispense charity."

"It is n't charity," the older man retorted. "It is just a big, brotherly helpfulness! Of course, it should be intelligently done; and I want to tell you that many a man in what we are pleased to call our own class has given me a lift over some pretty hard places in my life — when I most needed it, too! I never heard any of *them* call it 'charity.'"

"Our own class, yes! But those below us — it is hard to help them. Usually the unworthy get the bounty for the reason that they who really need it are too proud to accept help."

"If that is true, it is because we persist, from our petty little thrones, in thinking of it as charity — in calling it charity, even as we hand it down!" He realized that he was warming up, when his eye chanced to rest upon the Christmas decorations. "To the Carpenter of Nazareth, charity meant Love!" He placed his hand affectionately upon the younger man's broad shoulder.

"I know you will pardon a personality, my boy! For many generations my ancestors — and doubtless yours as well — have fought their country's battles in one way or another: as pioneers in the wilderness, as statesmen, or on the field of war. But none of them ever had a greater privilege than yours and mine — a part in the hardest and the best fight of all — the struggle of man to raise his fellowman! Here, Livingston, in our great cities is the real American conflict!"

"Ah is pow'ful sorry, Marse Calendah, ter

be int'ruptin' you erg'in, but Ah considahs hit mos' impohtant dat you come see 'bout dat grip ob yo's."

Bedford turned and grinned broadly, as he caught Hilary's eye.

"Be there in a minute! Elizabeth has something to ask you, Livingston. I'll leave you here with her, if you will excuse me."

"Certainly, Colonel. I have something to ask *her,*" Shepherd answered with easy assurance.

"About my Christmas gift—" Elizabeth began as soon as her father had gone.

"I brought it with me!" he assured her complacently, feeling for something in his waistcoat pocket.

"We were speaking, you know, of Dr. Warren—"

"Pardon me, Elizabeth," he interrupted, "my time is unusually precious to-day. I am leaving the city to-night—important appointment in New York."

She smiled responsively.

"Your fame is spreading."

"Oh, yes! You may remember hearing me speak of Dr. Kindtlieb, the great German specialist in children's diseases?"

"Yes, indeed! I saw in the papers that he is here in the city, now."

"Case of the Stuart child."

"Is n't it beautiful to think of that mighty man coming all the way from Berlin to see one dear little girl?"

"Oh, yes!" he agreed impatiently. "But let me proceed!"

"Pardon me!"

He missed the note of pain in her voice, and hurried on with what he wished to say.

"An unusually great honor has come to me. I met Dr. Kindtlieb in the Stuart case. A lucky opportunity enabled me to explain my discovery to him. His mighty intellect grasped it immediately. He took my hand, his eyes full of sympathy, and said, 'It is a

wonderful thing you have done, Dr. Shepherd! Your discovery will take high rank in the history of our profession! When do you announce it to the world?'"

"Oh, I am so proud of it all!" And her eyes said more than that.

"I replied to Dr. Kindtlieb that I was about ready now to disclose the discovery. Then I explained more fully the treatment. He was deeply impressed. 'Dr. Shepherd,' he said, 'it has apparently become your privilege to make a discovery that will enable physicians the world over to save countless lives.'"

"Do let me call Father! I want him to hear it all!"

"No. This is a part of your Christmas gift, and is for you alone. To resume: Dr. Kindtlieb is giving a dinner this evening—his farewell dinner to a few prominent physicians appointed by the Medical Society to entertain him while here. Since learning of

my discovery, he wants me to disclose it at this dinner, that he may share in its discussion."

"I cannot tell you how glad I am that you have won this splendid recognition!"

"Haven't finished yet! Dr. Kindtlieb is leaving the city immediately after this dinner, on the fast midnight train that reaches New York in time for him to address the Medical Society there to-morrow evening at a meeting especially called to hear him. He sails early next morning for Germany. He has asked me to accompany him to New York, and to share his time before the society there. I need not add that I quickly accepted this unusual honor!"

"I can see you now," the young woman began, her deep eyes eloquent with feeling. "I can see you now, telling the great men of your profession about the wonderful discovery you have made!" She was like a young prophetess, as she continued. "Oh,

the thousands of children — and mothers — to whose suffering bodies and breaking hearts you are bringing this blessing! And at Christmas-time — the day of Him who took the little ones to His own heart!" She touched his sleeve, almost reverently. "To think that *your* arms are even now reaching around the whole world, bearing this gift!"

"That part of it is all right," he acknowledged, remembering that surgeons must subdue mere emotions. "That is all right, of course, but we are digressing, and I must hurry on. Little time to spare, you know, when one is standing at the threshold of an important event in the history of medicine, with men like Kindtlieb waiting, you might say, for my every word! It occurred to me, Elizabeth, that this is a favorable occasion for a more definite understanding between us. I am thirty-two now — full time for a physician to contract a suitable marriage."

Elizabeth started, in wonder, as a child

might who sees through a microscope the dainty gossamer of a butterfly's wing changed into coarse, brilliant scales. She rose to her feet.

"Father will wish to congratulate you upon the great honor that has come to you."

"Let me finish," the physician insisted, and the girl hesitated under his dominating will. "You must know, Elizabeth, of my deep affection for you — particularly since my interview with your father."

"I know nothing of that!" she cried, in surprise.

"I remember now that our conversation took place as we drove to the station in my car the morning he started South. I flatter myself he does not disapprove of my suit. I am bringing it all to you, Elizabeth — my professional honor and eminence — "

"I shall expect more than that! I want to know that you have a *soul!*"

Her manner brought him as much of sur-

prise as a successful young physician should permit himself to feel. For a moment his highly trained mind grappled with the phenomenon. Then a singular thing occurred; he had the courage and the unshaken nerve to take out his watch, as when he counted the heart-beats of a dying child.

"Time is flying, Elizabeth, and time means much to me — to us both, just now!"

"I tried to tell you a few minutes ago, Livingston, about Dr. Warren's patient who is dying. He has done what he could. You alone, of all the men on earth, can save her now! Won't you stop for just a little while as you are reaching for fame and honor, and hold out your hands — your strong, skilful hands — in a Christmas benediction upon that poor, unhappy home?"

Dr. Shepherd's present case was developing differently from what his careful prognosis had led him to expect. Such incidents stung him always, indicating careless or mis-

taken work. As a highly trained observer, it was a reflection upon his skill. Something seemed to be eluding him as he turned the subject over in his mind. He recalled cases he had seen where physicians had become panic-stricken at some unexpected turn for the worse. Such emotions never conquered him. This was the time for quick and decisive action; all his instincts told him that. There were but two things possible in the crisis, and he chose the wrong one.

"Elizabeth," he said with professional brevity, "if all the little paupers in the city lay dying, I could not spare time to attend one of them. Why should this fad of the slums continually be coming between us? I am devoting my entire career to saving life — thousands of children's lives! Am I not doing my best — the best of any man on earth?"

"Then, won't you go to that dying child?"

"I cannot spare the time, and frankly, if I

could I would not go. You have heard what I came to tell you. I am expecting an answer."

"I cannot trust myself to answer you now!"

For a moment he studied her carefully, as she stood waiting for him to leave. He bowed distantly, and she saw him go.

Her father re-entered the room, and she met him under the chandelier upon which Hilary had carefully hung the mistletoe. Then she burst into tears, and hid her face upon his shoulder.

V

DR. SHEPHERD'S offices were upon the top floor of a tall building that shot skyward above humbler neighbors built soon after the great fire. His laboratory occupied the north rooms where nature contributed the true, white light so necessary to research, leaving the southern exposure available for reception rooms. He had learned as a boy in the country the value of sunshine and good cheer, and had cunningly utilized this knowledge in arranging his professional establishment. The pale golden color of the walls made people think of meadow lands in June, even when clouds were heaviest or the western wind floated a veil of smoke over the city. The white enamelled woodwork and the rich, clean-looking furniture were suggestive of sanitation. There were a few selected books and

magazines upon the table. A landscape in oil, excellently hung, had the quality of interesting impatient people who studied its trees and wondered how the painter had managed to catch the gentle sway of the summer breeze. Near the entrance stood an attendant's desk, with the usual telephone equipment. A large, sunny waiting-room was devoted to the entertainment of children and contained precisely the things to delight little patients. Sometimes expeditions to the city's parks were abandoned and substantial fees entered upon Dr. Shepherd's books because of this feature. There were fascinating toys of the latest kinds, and a sweet-voiced girl with a talent for games had charge of the room during the hours when the young specialist might be consulted. The private office made you feel better for having entered it; lest the grim element of his work be overlooked, however, the white silk hangings of a spotless case of ample propor-

tions were drawn aside with consummate carelessness, and gleaming surgical instruments might be seen upon the glass shelves within.

Catherine Lewis was an assistant in the laboratory where the discovery that Dr. Kindtlieb was about to honor had been so brilliantly worked out. After taking her degree at one of the universities, she had done post-graduate work in scientific subjects, but her father's death altered all of her plans. She entered a training school, completed its course, and became a nurse. One of her first cases brought her to the notice of Dr. Shepherd who chanced to learn of her research work, and was quick to recognize in her the type of laboratory assistant he wanted. For several years she had been in his service, and was deeply absorbed in the discovery.

On this Christmas Eve the attendant was ill, and Miss Lewis had taken charge of

the reception-room. She was a serene and wholesome young woman, and the white uniform and cap of her school that she still wore loyally, harmonized with other details of the offices. It was five o'clock, and she was answering a telephone call:

"This is Dr. Shepherd's office. . . . I'm afraid not, madame; the Doctor has an important engagement, and leaves on the midnight train for New York. Will Wednesday, at 4:30, be convenient? . . . The name, please? . . . Oh, Mrs. Fairington! Thank you, madame. Wednesday afternoon, at 4:30."

She hung up the receiver with a smile, and was noting the appointment in the engagement book, when Dr. Robert Warren entered.

"Good-afternoon, Miss Lewis. Is Dr. Shepherd in?"

"No, Dr. Warren. He has not been here since morning. But I expect him soon."

She hesitated for a moment and added, "He will be very busy when he comes. He dines with Dr. Kindtlieb this evening."

"Dr. Kindtlieb! Of Berlin?"

"Yes, Doctor. They both leave on the midnight train for New York, where they address a meeting of the Medical Society, notwithstanding it being Christmas. It is their only chance of hearing Dr. Kindtlieb there, as he sails early next morning for home."

She could see from Dr. Warren's expression that he was keenly disappointed.

"Dr. Kindtlieb is very much interested in the discovery. It is a splendid recognition of Dr. Shepherd's work."

"Yes, and he deserves it," Warren replied. "It is wonderful! Already I yearn to be administering it to my little patients on the West Side."

"It would be dangerous, just now, to entrust the formula to any one not familiar

with it. But he is rapidly standardizing it, and before long physicians will be using it in every-day practice."

"But I need it now!" Warren replied, reverting to the purpose of his call. "And the discovery needs such a test as the case which brings me here! Can you tell me where Dr. Shepherd is?"

"Did you inquire at the Children's Hospital?"

"Yes. He had not been there since morning."

"Is it one of — of your own cases, Doctor?"

"Yes, Miss Lewis. A poor woman's only child. She is far past my skill, and it is important that Dr. Shepherd see her at once. Without him, she will die before midnight."

"Perhaps he is at Dr. Kindtlieb's hotel. He is stopping at the Michigan."

"I will go there, and if I do not find him, will return."

VI

IT was nearly six o'clock when Dr. Shepherd reached his office. He handed his fur-lined overcoat to Miss Lewis—he was accustomed to being served.

"I am late, Miss Lewis. It has been rather a trying day for me."

His complacent mastery of self and situation rarely tolerated and never invited sympathy. Miss Lewis knew this.

"I tried earlier in the afternoon to reach you at the Children's Hospital," she remarked.

"Not been there since morning. One must learn to submit to much, when consecrating his life to a mighty work."

"Yes, Doctor."

He was looking over the engagement book, and she noticed that he was beginning to regain his usual good spirits.

"Nothing important, I see," he com-

mented. "Mrs. Fairington — Reginald's mamma!" He smiled indulgently. "You remember Reginald?"

"Yes, Doctor; quite well."

"Healthy little animal! You told Mrs. Fairington I am called to New York?"

"Yes, Doctor."

"I see that you made an appointment with her for Wednesday afternoon. It is quite possible that the Medical Society of New York will want to give me a dinner, and that, of course, would delay my return. Should this be the case, I will wire you, and you will postpone all engagements. In doing so, you will naturally furnish full particulars of my absence — Dr. Kindtlieb, paper before the New York Society, the dinner, and all that! It will not be necessary to mention that Dr. Kindtlieb has only recently become — er — acquainted with me."

"I think I understand, Doctor."

"I am sure you do," he condescendingly

agreed. "I shall dress for dinner here, and devote the remaining time to arrangement of data for my paper before the Society in New York. I am not to be disturbed. Of course, if Dr. Kindtlieb *should* drop in, and — er — insists upon seeing me personally, you might let me know." And he laughed pleasantly. "However, you need not wait longer than six-thirty. Good-night!"

He crossed over to the door of his private office.

"Oh, yes! I nearly forgot — so busy these days, you know. I am rather gratified that you will be in charge of the office during my absence, and shall expect you to be on duty to-morrow. Sorry, if this disturbs any plans you may have for Christmas day, but the newspapers are likely to ask for information concerning my trip with Dr. Kindtlieb, the discovery, and the New York lecture. Unfortunately, a doctor is not permitted to advertise his business as other men may."

"Very well, Doctor; I shall be here," she assured him, hiding her disappointment.

He had hardly closed the door behind him when Hilary Brooks walked in. He was wrapped about in a huge storm coat, several sizes too large for his frail body, and wore an old-fashioned silk hat, which he removed ceremoniously.

"Ebenin', ma'm! Ah is lookin' foh Doctah Robert Warren, de charity doctah. Kin you infohm me ef dis is his orfice?"

"No; this is not his office, but he was here a few minutes ago."

"Jes' lef', you say, ma'm? Den, Ah mus' bid you good-day."

"He is likely to return before very long."

"Ef dat is de case, ma'm, Ah suttinly is glad to heah hit!" He fished into his pocket and produced a letter. "You see, ma'm, dis am a mos' impohtant matter! Po' little sick chile er-dyin' ovah on de Wes' Side! Marse Calendah — de Cunnel, you undahstan',

ma'm — an' Little Miss, an' Doctah Warren, all ob 'em, been tryin' ter git de bes' chillun's doctah in de city ter 'tend de chile, but 'pear like he kinder side-steppin' de case! So Marse Calendah he writ dis lettah ter Doctah Warren tellin' him ef he ain' able ter git de ver' bes' doctah, den he is ter hiah de *nex'* ver' bes' doctah, an' sen' him right ovah ter de little sick chile. Marse Calendah he han' me dis lettah hisse'f, an' 'struct me ter fine Doctah Warren. Ah wah ter come heah ter No. 1866 Dependence Buildin' fu'st, an' ef he ain' heah, ter go on ovah ter de Wes' Side whah de little chile an' her ma lib. Yassum, Marse Calendah allus sen' me when he gotter be suah ob habin' er thing done right!"

"I would be glad to deliver your letter to Dr. Warren when he comes, if you care to leave it with me."

"Leabe er lettah wid anybody else dat Marse Calendah say Ah is ter pussonally de-

livah!" he protested. "Ah 'preciates yo' cou'tesy, ma'm — yassum, Ah suttinly do — but Ah'd jes' as soon think ob leavin' you mah *beavah!*" And he laughed good-naturedly, as he stroked his precious hat.

"Won't you be seated?" she asked hospitably, her eyes twinkling as she regarded his headgear. It seemed safe to change the subject. "Unusual weather, isn't it?"

"Hit sho'ly am; but den Ah is frequently obsehved dat *all* weathah am considahed mo' er less unusual."

"I think I must have heard of you before."

"Dat so, ma'm?" he responded, immensely interested. "P'rhaps we is favohed wid mutual 'quaintances."

"Dr. Shepherd has often ——"

"'Scuse me foh int'ruptin', ma'm, but what Doctah Shepherd you 'lude ter?"

"Dr. Livingston Shepherd — this is his office, you know."

"Doctah Shepherd's orfice! Ah nevah knowed dat!"

"Then you didn't notice his name on the door?"

Unwittingly she had touched his tender spot.

"Well, ma'm, you see when Ah stahts out ter 'complish er puppose, Ah don' nevah seem ter hab no time ter go traipsin' 'round readin' signs on no do's. Ah'se got mo' ter 'complish in dis life dan dat soht ob thing! An' so dis am Doctah Shepherd's orfice!" he mused. "Am he heah?"

"Yes, the Doctor is in."

"De Lawd be praise'!"

The old man's delight on learning of Dr. Shepherd's presence was a puzzle to Miss Lewis. She was about to question him further, when the telephone called her away. It was Mrs. Fairington again, and it seemed important that Dr. Shepherd should see her Reginald before leaving the city.

"Is he seriously ill?" Miss Lewis inquired, earnestly.

His mother was afraid he would be, as the result of an escapade in the park; he had been found tobogganing with forbidden and impossible little boys! His feet were cold when Nursie brought him home, and Mamma felt it necessary that Dr. Shepherd see him at once. Miss Lewis was sympathetic but feared her chief would hardly be able to see the boy, as he was to dine with Dr. Kindtlieb, the eminent specialist from Berlin. But she agreed to disobey orders so far as to permit Mrs. Fairington herself to discuss Reginald's case with the Doctor, and switched in the line to the private office. A few moments later the young physician opened the door.

"Miss Lewis!" he said, "I have promised Mrs. Fairington to call at her home for a few minutes before leaving the city. Enter

the charge now — I might overlook it on my return from New York."

"Will you have the time, Doctor? Your appointment with Dr. Kindtlieb, you know!"

"I'll have to take the time. She is apprehensive about the boy. I will drive out for a few minutes before dinner, and see if we cannot pull him through!"

Hilary Brooks had risen, and was awaiting his opportunity. His manner was so unobtrusive that Shepherd had not noticed him.

"Bring me the last lot of microscopical specimens from the laboratory, Miss Lewis. I shall take them to New York with me."

"Pardon me, Doctor — have you definitely decided to take them? You may remember we were not entirely satisfied with them."

"Perhaps you are right," he admitted with some embarrassment; "they are not as

convincing as I should like them to be. We really should have had another month's research along that particular line."

He turned, frowning, and saw Hilary.

"Why, hello, Hilary!" he cried, momentarily forgetting his professional dignity in the surprise of seeing the old man. "What brings you here?"

"Ole niggah sorter drap in on you unawares ob whah he am at!"

"I thought possibly — er — Colonel Bedford had sent you — with a message?" Shepherd suggested.

"No, sah; ef Marse Calendah got any word foh you he mighty li'ble ter fotch hit hisse'f. Ah didn't eben know dis wah yo' orfice when Ah come, but now dat Ah is heah, Ah hab er message foh you, sah."

"You may deliver it," the young man vouchsafed. "I am very busy."

For a moment Hilary stood confused, not

I have no discovery to make. *It is a failure.*"

[Page 125]

certain how he should begin. Then his expression brightened.

"Doctah, Ah is er old man. Dese pilgrim feet am fas' carryin' me ter de Bordahland! Foh many er yeah Ah been journeyin' de road dat yo' yo'se'f is jes' beginnin'—dat is mah 'polergy foh 'dressin' you now. On de long, long road dere am rocks an' pitfalls, an' gaps whah de bridges been washed out in de darkness ob de night!"

"Yes! But what is your message?"

"Dis is de message Ah hab foh you: Dere am only one Light dat kin pen'trate de darkness ob dat road!"

"But why do you bring this—this message to me?"

"Doctah, Ah knows dat dyin' chile! Her baby fingahs hab teched mah old black han's an' face! Ah also knows yo' skill! Can't you see, sah? Foh jes' dis night, de Light is offahed ter you!"

With a gesture of impatience, the fashionable physician walked briskly away. He hesitated, with his hand upon the door; something forced him to turn and look back at the aged negro. Then with a troubled face he closed the door behind him.

"Now some folks might be disoncouraged by de way dat young doctah-man conduct hisse'f," Hilary mused. "De idear ob his wastin' all dat good time gwine up dar ter 'scribe candy-pills foh er little fellah wid nuffin de mattah 'ceptin' er terborgan ride! Howsomevah, dis is er big city, an' Ah reckon we kin fine some uddah feesician foh de sick chile ovah in de Settlement."

He felt vanquished, notwithstanding his effort to make the best of the situation. He started back to his corner from which he had so valiantly but so gently sallied forth. A photograph upon the wall arrested his attention.

"Dat mos' prob'bly am one ob de uddah

famous young doctah-men," he commented. "De crit'cism Ah makes ob pictures ob great young men, is dat dey take hit ser hard tryin' ter *look* great!"

Hilary's critical moods never lasted long. Life was too full of beautiful things, of things worth while, to waste time hunting for less than the best.

"Ah'se allus had reason'ble good luck mahse'f," he used to tell such of his friends as complained of trifles, "an' Ah don't take no stock in folks dat kicks continuous. Suttin niggah tole me onct dat he been chased an' pursued by misfohtune all his life. Come ter pin him down, Ah finerly discovah dat de wuss thing evah happen ter him consisted ob one of dese heah yaller-jacket bumble bees stingin' de fore laig ob er ole hoss standin' in a puddle ob dirty water jes' as dat niggah pass by in his Sunday clothes!"

He was too keen and too just an observer of people and things to content himself with

inaccurate or unfair judgment, and the firm courageous mouth, the keen challenging eyes of the young man in the photograph were not overlooked.

"Too bad Ah can't see his uddah ear," he reflected with an impulse to turn the print around. "Ah'se er great han' foh studyin' folkses' lef' ears. Lot ob human nature stick out all ovah er man's lef' ear!"

He was absorbed in conjecture as to what sort of a defence the famous young man on the wall would make against the forces that had attacked Dr. Shepherd that afternoon, when Calendar Bedford and his daughter entered the reception room. Reinforcements had arrived, and Hilary welcomed them.

"Marse Calendah!" he began. "You nevah tole me dat No. 1866 Dependence Buildin' wah Dr. Shepherd's orfice! Jes' bline, staggahin' niggah luck gimme de chance ter see him!"

"Is he here now?" Bedford inquired.

"Yassah, he heah."

"Have you found Dr. Warren?"

"No, sah; but he expected heah ver' soon, too."

"Then I shall probably see him myself. You hurry on over to little Jeannette's home, and leave the letter for him there."

"Yessah."

It was not Bedford's first call at Dr. Shepherd's offices.

"Rather a cheerful place, is it not?" he remarked to his daughter. "The laboratory is the interesting part of it—that is a real work-shop! The rest of the establishment always gave me the feeling of being in a sort of conservatory, devoted to unnatural growths in an unnatural atmosphere."

He felt that Elizabeth needed diversion. On her first appeal he had refused to bring her to the place, knowing how hard it was for her to ask it, but she had convinced him that it would be harder not to come. He

was chatting about Miss Lewis and her part of the work when Dr. Shepherd emerged from his consulting room. For a moment he paused wondering; then he advanced with cool, professional courtesy.

"How do you do, Colonel Bedford—Miss Bedford! Neither requiring my professional services, I hope?"

"Yes, but not for ourselves!" Bedford replied shortly. "I have gathered from Elizabeth something of your attitude in regard to —well, in regard to that dying child over in the slums. There must have been some misunderstanding. Tell me what all of this business is about!"

"Perhaps Miss Bedford would prefer to have you accept her view of the — er—the misunderstanding."

"She has told me as much as she cares to have me know."

"Our purpose in calling on him may not be quite clear to Dr. Shepherd," Elizabeth

ventured. "It concerns little Jeannette—no one else!"

"I have explained to your daughter, Colonel Bedford, that I do not care for the work that seems of especial interest to her. We have often discussed the matter, and I trust you will not misunderstand me when I tell you that my time just now is most valuable. I have an important—"

When a young man is patiently explaining how precious his time is, nothing is more irritating than to be interrupted, and Dr. Shepherd stopped impatiently as Miss Lewis came from the laboratory. Bedford advanced to greet her, with the deferential courtesy of the old school.

"A Merry Christmas to you, Miss Lewis!"

"And to you, Colonel Bedford!"

"My dear," her father said, turning to Elizabeth, "I want you to meet Miss Lewis."

The two young women greeted each other.

"Miss Lewis is planning the pure milk equipment that the little Mission Church is to have. How is your work progressing?"

"Quite well, indeed." Then she noticed her employer's expression. "There is one detail I would like to ask you about, Colonel Bedford. Would you mind stepping into the laboratory for a few minutes?"

Bedford looked puzzled, but followed her from the room.

"It was very hard for me to come!" Elizabeth said, when she and Shepherd were alone. "Nothing less than that dying girl could have brought me!"

"I see nothing to be gained by our resuming the discussion of the case of Dr. Warren's patient."

"Oh, there is so much that might be gained! A child's life—a mother's heart! Won't you go to them?"

"It would mean disappointment to Dr. Kindtlieb and the other physicians who will be waiting to hear of my discovery. To administer my specific to the child might even result in missing the midnight train and the address before the New York Society. I cannot consider it for a moment!"

"Don't you think it more important to save that little life than that your discovery be announced hastily? You told me not long ago, that it would take several months of hard work before the formula might safely be used by other physicians."

He flushed almost guiltily, as he glanced around to reassure himself that Miss Lewis had not heard what Elizabeth had said.

"I have worked hard since then," he replied, "and am now reasonably confident that it should be announced under the present favorable conditions."

"I am afraid you do not fully understand —that you have never seen such a case as the

one we have been discussing. For a long time it has seemed to me that you will not completely appreciate the physician's sacred obligation to humanity, until you, too, have learned to suffer!"

"I *have* learned to suffer," he answered with almost childish simplicity that she had never seen in him before. "I learned it early in life. As a boy I saw my own mother taken as I clung to her!"

With a glad, surprised smile upon her face she looked tenderly into his eyes.

"Poor boy!" she murmured.

"I would be glad, if I could, to do as you wish, Elizabeth — for the sake of what you have been to me. But I cannot — I do not see how I can!"

She laid her hand gently on his arm. For a moment she felt that she had won, and no event of her life had ever given her such happiness. But the old, hard look came back into his face.

"I am sorry—it is impossible," he said in a tone of finality, as Bedford returned from the laboratory.

"Come, Elizabeth, we must go!" he said, offering his hand to Shepherd. "Good-bye, my boy!"

The physician bowed them out. Miss Lewis found him pacing back and forth across the floor when she came in with some small strips of glass in her hands. She stood looking at him in surprise, but he did not seem aware of her presence. It was not until Dr. Warren entered at the hall door that he raised his head.

"Do you wish to see me, Dr. Warren?" he inquired in a chilly tone.

"Yes, very much, Dr. Shepherd. I have a patient, desperately ill, whom I wish you to see."

"Another of your West Side paupers, I presume?" Shepherd remarked with intentional insolence.

"It is a little girl, who is dying!" Warren replied. "You will find the case of especial interest—"

"Especial rot! How often have I told you that I will visit none of your cases? If you wanted me to see your patient, why didn't you bring her to my clinic this morning?"

"Perhaps you did not understand me fully, Doctor. I explained that she is dying. I have done what I could for her, but I know, and so do you, that you are the only physician on earth who can save such a case!"

"Your opinion is most gratifying, I am sure, but apparently you are not advised of the value of my time."

"Yes, I know you are a busy man."

"I am to dine with Dr. Kindtlieb and other eminent physicians this evening, after which I am to accompany Dr. Kindtlieb to New York where we both address the Medical Society upon the subject of my discovery.

Under such conditions, it impresses me as presumptuous for you to ask me to take charge of the case of a pauper child somewhere over in your sacred slums. It is absurd, Dr. Warren — quite absurd!"

"Dr. Shepherd," Warren said patiently, in the tone of one who is about to begin all over again, "it seems to me — "

Again the man of fashion interrupted him.

"I am busily engaged just now. I have no wish to be other than courteous to you — for the sake of old times, and all that — but really, you must excuse me now!"

The slum doctor flushed angrily.

"I refuse to be dismissed by you in this insolent manner, and under such conditions! Now, you will listen to me! There is something, or ought to be something beyond our mere personal impulses, deeply concerned in this matter."

"What, pray?"

"Fraternal obligations,—professional ethics—"

"You will excuse me from discussing ethics with you! Suppose we resume the subject sometime when I have nothing else on hand?" And Dr. Shepherd stepped to the corridor door, which he swung open meaningly.

Warren followed him as if to leave; then he suddenly slammed the door, and stood before it with folded arms, his eyes blazing dangerously.

"What does this mean?" Shepherd demanded angrily.

"What does it mean? You poor, befeathered cockerel! You, who have scratched up a priceless jewel—"

"Leave this place! Leave immediately—I warn you!"

The laboratory assistant stood transfixed. She had never seen her employer angry be-

fore, and now his clenched fist seemed ready to strike.

Warren had no intention of leaving. He had calmed down, and his voice was cold with bitter denunciation.

"You miserable imitation of a real physician!" he began, when the other man pointed meaningly at Miss Lewis.

"Remember, sir; there is a woman present!"

"I also remember there is a woman present at the bedside of that dying child. A pitiable, forsaken woman, struggling alone for that little life!"

Shepherd felt that at least he had diverted from himself the ill-bred comments of the person from across the river.

"You may recall the fact, Dr. Warren, that I used to warn you that you would never be a success in life until you learned to control your temper!"

"Oh, leave me out of it!" Warren suggested wearily. Then he suddenly reached out and took Shepherd firmly by the arm, and, as if he were a school-boy led him to a chair.

"Sit down!" he commanded. "I want to talk to you."

"What do you mean, if I may venture a question in my own office?"

"You are drifting, Shepherd, drifting! I tell you this—I who since boyhood have paid homage to your marvellous nature—since manhood, to your wonderful skill!"

The Fourth Physician

VII

DR. SHEPHERD sat quietly for a few moments. Then he looked up into the face of his old friend.

"You have never understood me, Warren. Our viewpoints are different. You have been content with small things, while I have reached for the heights! You attack my defences bluntly, and assume because I am too busy to go with you, that I have no interest in the child — or perhaps, for exactness, I should say in the child's disease. For reasons that must be clear to you, it is impossible — quite impossible — for me to attend your patient. But I am not willing that her isolated case be lost to science. May I ask you," he inquired professionally, "when, in this instance, you apprehend final dissolution?"

"She will die before midnight unless you go to her!"

"Let us not discuss further the possibility of my going to her." He rose and went to a desk, opened a compartment and took out a blank which he examined with pride before offering it to Warren. "Now, Doctor, here is a printed form that I myself have prepared. You will doubtless return to the child. I desire that you record the history of the case and preserve it for me until my return from New York."

Warren ran his eye over the form.

"You will carefully observe and note in the space provided for that purpose, if death be preceded by convulsions."

A look of horror came into the slum doctor's face. He folded the blank as if to pocket it, then deliberately tore it into small pieces, which he held away from him as he dropped them to the floor.

"My God! What is our profession coming to?"

"Dr. Warren, are you losing your sanity?

Or did you lose it years ago when you declined my offer of a partnership, to make your reputation among paupers and crooks?"

The man from the Nineteenth Ward was too discouraged to retaliate, and started to leave.

"Let me get back to my dying pauper! I will not detain you longer!"

"One moment, before you go. Now that the subject has been introduced, let me inquire, as I have often wished to do before, what was the real cause of your deserting your excellent professional prospects to devote your life to—er—charity?"

"You were the cause of it—*you,* more than anybody else!" Warren retorted hotly.

"Really—"

"It was in the second year after we graduated—the year you succeeded in attracting society's attention to your splendid gifts. It was on Christmas day, and oh, how cold it

was! We had just left your office after discussing the partnership you had proposed. I thought your terms hard, but had promised an answer next day. We parted at the sidewalk where you took a cab for the home of a new-found friend where you had been invited to dine."

"I lost no time in seeking practice then," Shepherd put in complacently; "now it seeks me."

"Within a few blocks of where I left you, in passing a building, since torn down, I noticed in the partial shelter of its old-fashioned stoop, a woman — a *woman,* mind you — in that blizzard, with a babe at her breast. She looked up to me in piteous appeal and then to the shoestrings she had for sale. Fresh from your influence, I recalled that rusty old saw of yours to the effect that the unworthy get the bounty because those who need it are too proud to accept help. But the sight of that child was too much for me,

and I stopped to give the woman something. Then I remembered that I had only a dollar, and felt that I could not afford to give it all."

As a hint to his visitor Shepherd reached into his pocket, brought out a pair of gloves, and began to draw them on.

"I went to the little restaurant where you and I used to dine before you became fashionable, and had my Christmas dinner alone, but with that woman and her babe upon my conscience. I took what was left of the dollar and went back to the place where I had left them, but they were gone—*gone,* I tell you!"

"Doubtless to a better dinner than yours had been, if I correctly remember the place you had patronized!"

"I found her bunch of shoestrings driven around a post where they were still whipping and threshing in that zero gale! Next morning, the coroner's physician, summoned else-

where, telephoned me to conduct a post-mortem at the morgue. May Christ forgive me! *Oh, may Christ forgive me!* It was she—still clasping that starved babe to her frozen breast!"

Dr. Shepherd's manner suddenly changed. He stepped to the door of his private office where he stood with his partly gloved hands clasped behind him.

"I thought a good deal about you, and about myself, before I finished that post-mortem," Warren continued, "and I decided there were people in this city who needed me more than you did. And, strangely enough, as I took the babe from those frozen arms, I recalled your having told me when we were in college that your own mother's life might have been spared if the physician had gone promptly to her, instead of going to a less urgent case at a rich man's house." He walked slowly to one of the windows, as a

new thought came to him. "There is another claim upon you, Shepherd," he remarked without looking around to see what effect his words might have upon the other man.

"What is this other claim?" Shepherd asked in a low and altered tone.

"The wishes of the woman who loves you."

Shepherd started forward impulsively with outstretched hand, but the friend of his boyhood had drawn aside the draperies, and stood dejectedly looking down upon the brilliantly lighted street.

The eminent young specialist began mechanically to draw off his gloves, which fell to the floor at his feet; he dropped into a chair and buried his face in his hands.

A tower in the distance caught the eye of the man from the West Side. It was a splendid structure, outlined with gleaming lights and surmounted by a golden figure of

Diana which turned slowly this way and that, trimming itself to the fury of the winter gale.

"How much we are doing to-day," Warren said, as though thinking aloud, "how much in the name of Education, Industry, Charity! God grant we may learn to do more in the name of Love!"

He had not intended the words for Shepherd — in fact, they were not meant for any one, but Dr. Shepherd took them into his heart, and full of gentle resolution arose and went into his private room, where Miss Lewis followed him. He deftly selected from the glass case certain instruments which had proven themselves worthy of his skill.

"Bring my best equipment for administering the discovery," he directed. "Also a surgeon's gown — I shall have no time to change my clothes." The instruments were quickly dropped into a case, and he returned to the reception room. Miss Lewis brought from

the laboratory a leather bag and a gown of white clinging material loosely folded.

For the moment Shepherd had forgotten about the other doctor, his highly trained mind concentrating upon the work before him. With professional foresight, he opened the bag and glanced over its contents. As he took the gown, a shadow of indecision crossed his face. But his laboratory assistant already had brought his overcoat, and with something akin to joy, was holding it for him. He dropped the gown into the bag, as Dr. Warren turned gloomily from the window.

"Come, Bob!" the physician of fashion commanded. "We must hurry! I shall go with you."

VIII

IT seemed to Warren that a great hope had been realized in a most sudden and unceremonious manner. Old Hilary himself could not have shown more of the spirit of the faithful, willing servant, as he eagerly took the heavy bag from Dr. Shepherd's hand. Arm in arm, as though they were boys again, they went out together.

Miss Lewis followed to the corridor door and stood looking at the shaft where an elevator had taken them aboard and dropped swiftly out of sight. One by one, other cars bobbed up, and on the stroke of a signal bell were gone; but she remained standing in the doorway, until the insistent clamor of the telephone called her to her desk.

"This is Dr. Shepherd's office," she answered. "Who is speaking? . . . A newspaper reporter? . . . No, Dr.

Shepherd is not in. He has just left on an important case. . . . I cannot say whether he will accompany Dr. Kindtlieb to New York—it will depend upon his little patient's condition! He will not leave her in danger even for so great an honor as Dr. Kindtlieb has conferred upon him! . . . I cannot tell you more. Good-bye!"

It struck her with almost comical directness as she replaced the receiver upon its hook, that her "interview" for the newspapers, as prepared in advance, had been vigorously blue-pencilled. She was smiling at the thought when Dr. Warren returned.

"Miss Lewis," he cried eagerly, "Dr. Shepherd has hurried on to little Jeannette, and sent me back to ask you to join him there—he will need you."

She rose responsively.

"I am also to telephone his apologies to Dr. Kindtlieb. He will have to cut out the dinner!"

The Fourth Physician

She had just gotten the Michigan on the line when a big, handsome man of Teutonic appearance entered the room. He was about fifty-five, with heavy white hair and square-trimmed beard. He glanced about through the thick lenses of his small foreign-looking gold spectacles.

"Iss Dr. Shepherd in?" he asked with a shade of German accent. "I am Dr. Kindtlieb."

Miss Lewis put aside the telephone and explained that Dr. Shepherd had just left the office.

"Ah, well! It iss not of importance. He iss to be my guest at dinner. I shall see him then."

She looked over to Warren.

"Dr. Kindtlieb, this is Dr. Warren. He has a message for you."

The mighty German bowed courteously.

"Do I understand that you, too, are a physician?"

"Yes, Dr. Kindtlieb. I was about to telephone you that Dr. Shepherd will be unable to dine with you this evening. He has a little patient who is very low—in fact, her condition is such that it may prevent his joining you on the midnight train."

"Ah, I hope not! That *would* be a disappointment!"

"I think I may say, sir, that it would be the greatest disappointment of Dr. Shepherd's life."

"An unusual man, iss he not? And his discovery—" he inquired cautiously, "you know of that?"

"Yes, Dr. Kindtlieb."

"Wonderful! In passing to my hotel, I chanced to see his name upon the window there. The wish came to me to see the laboratory where his discovery has been worked out. I find myself deeply interested in what you tell me of this latest case of his. He will administer his treatment to the child?"

"Yes, Dr. Kindtlieb. She is a poor, fatherless little girl in a destitute home in what is sometimes called our 'slums'—if you know the word. I found her this morning far beyond my skill, and I came to Dr. Shepherd, who was dressing for your dinner. It is to this case he has gone."

He saw the blue eyes of the great man brighten.

"It iss the quality he has shown that adds much to the skill of American practitioners!"

Miss Lewis had donned her wraps and hat, and Warren saw that she was ready to go.

"Pardon me, Dr. Kindtlieb, while I write an address. Miss Lewis here, who is Dr. Shepherd's laboratory assistant, is hurrying to join him at the home of the little patient." He wrote hastily upon a card which he laid upon the table for Miss Lewis, who was locking her desk.

"Will you also oblige me with Dr. Shepherd's address?" Dr. Kindtlieb asked. "Should it happen that I do not see him again, I shall wish to write him from Berlin. Ah, I see several cards upon the table here — may I take one?"

"Certainly, sir!" Warren replied, turning for a word of direction to Miss Lewis.

"I must not longer detain you," Dr. Kindtlieb said, as he took Warren's hand. He bowed to Miss Lewis and left.

"Now, Doctor, the address, please!"

"I put it on the table for you, but it is gone!" he cried in surprise. "I see what became of it, now! Dr. Kindtlieb has taken the wrong card."

"Write another, please!" she asked, with the eager haste of a girl. "I must lose no time to-night!"

Warren smiled.

"Why should I have written it at all? We are both going there!"

The Fourth Physician

IX

IT was eleven o'clock and Miss Lewis stood at the cook-stove in Mary Walker's home. She heard footsteps on the gallery outside, followed by a knock.

"Come in, Dr. Warren!" she called.

There was no response. She crossed the room and opened the door. Hilary Brooks stood at the threshold holding, with exaggerated effort, a large hamper, from which rose a small, gayly dressed Christmas tree, partly obscuring the eager old face. He was generously wrapped, even for so cold a night, and seemed embarrassed that his precious freight prevented the prompt removal of his hat.

"Ah hopes you will pahdon me, ma'm, foh de retention ob mah beavah—" he began.

"Certainly," Miss Lewis replied. "Come in."

Hilary entered.

"How am de po' little sick chile?" he inquired anxiously.

"We feel greatly encouraged, but she is very ill."

"De Lawd be praise' foh *any* oncouragement when er chile am sick!"

"Won't you put down your basket? It must be heavy."

"Thank you, ma'm; thank you kinely. Jes' er few things — " he explained, carefully placing the hamper upon the table and ceremoniously removing his hat, "jes' er few things what Little Miss an' Marse Calendah — de Cunnel, ma'm — sent foh de chile an' her ma. Leastwise, Marse Calendah *call* 'em er few, but 'cording ter de heft ob 'em, dey am many!"

"Did you carry them far?"

"No, ma'm. De sho-fer offahed ter he'p me up de stairs wid de basket, but

'membahin' he gotter hurry back wid de car, ole niggah tote hit erlone."

"Come over to the stove and warm yourself. Are you not cold?"

As if suddenly recalling something, Hilary began energetically to unbutton his ulster.

"Ah would n't want ter 'zactly say dat, ma'm! Fact is, Ah'se jes' de op'site — aldo hit sho'ly am er chilly night! One ob de suahest specifics foh cole evah prescribe' by Madeira Medicker — one ob de famous ole doctahs, you know, ma'm — am vig'rous ex'cise, well rubbed in!"

"You feel safe then?" she inquired smilingly.

"Yassum, Ah suttinly do," he assured her, glancing at the basket. "Dat is, ef ole Doc' Medicker kin be depended on. Howsomevah, Ah is allus made hit er rule ter sto' up lots ob preserve strength foh Chris'mus time — we needs hit at *ouah* house!"

"It is a busy time for most of us."

"Yassum. Hol'days allus gib me palp'tation."

"Palpitation of the heart?" Miss Lewis asked, with professional concern.

"Wusser'n dat — palp'tation ob de foot," he corrected her seriously. He had taken off his coat and was beginning to unwind from neck and ears what appeared to be endless layers of red comforter. "Now, you go right erlong wid yo' oc'pation, ma'm."

"I will. Take a chair and rest yourself."

"Ef you quite suah you'll 'scuse me, Ah will ervail mahself ob yo' cou'tesy. Coming up dem steps jes' now Ah suttinly feel right smart like Ole Map hisse'f."

"Old Map?"

"De man what tote de earf on he shouldah."

"You mean Atlas?"

"Yassum; Ah 'membahs now Marse Calendah *do* call him dat paht ob de time," he

admitted, somewhat taken aback. "'Pears like de ole fellah had two names, but wheddah hit wah Map Atlas er Atlas Map, Ah disremembahs hearin' Marse Calendah say." He had completed the removal of his comforter, and was rolling it up with deliberate dignity. "Yassum, Little Miss tell de shofer ter hurry home wid de car, an' den she tell me ter wait here — which ef you has no erjections, Ah'll do."

"None at all! You must n't mind my being busy."

"Go right erlong, ma'm," he urged, carefully depositing the comforter in his hat. Then, as if asked a question, he continued, "No'm, Little Miss nevah say *why* de car gotter go back, but dis ole niggah know, jes' de same! She mean dat her an' Marse Calendah gwine follah dat basket. Dat is, ef de comp'ny we got at ouah house evah do rec'lect dey got homes ob deir own! Yassum, Little Miss an' Marse

Calendah mighty li'ble ter bring up de rear ob dis percession." And he chuckled softly at the idea.

"You mean that Miss Bedford is coming here — this dreadful night?"

"Why, ma'm, dat ain' nuffin foh her an' Marse Calendah ter do! You see, us bein' Bedfordses ob Hanovah County, we kin affohd ter go whah we pleases, widout — well, widout injerin' ouah perfessional rep'tations. Ah ain' nevah seen one ob ouah family what wah n't allus ready ter back up deir pity wid er ack ob kineness. Marse Calendah of'en say, jes' like his pa say befo' him, dat dere ain' no real symp'thy in de worl' widout effoht behine hit. Yassum, dat what they bofe say, an' what 's mo', dat 's de way dey bofe *ack!*"

"And it 's the kind of sympathy people need over in this part of the city, Mr. — "

Hilary rose quickly and bowed with old-fashioned courtesy.

"Mah name am Hilary — Hilary Brooks, ma'm. An' Ah trus' yo' will pahdon me, but Ah don' nevah expec' no white folks ter call me *Mistah.* Sech as perfers ter mention mah name wid er entitlement mos' gene'lly calls me *Uncle* Hilary."

"Very well, Uncle Hilary, I'm going to ask you to set this pan outside the window until it cools a little."

"Suttinly!" Hilary cried, rising responsively. "Wid de greates' ob felickity!" He cautiously raised the sash, set the pan on the sill, and closed down the window with great haste. "Ah is not infohmed concernin' de ingregiums ob dat pan," he remarked, rubbing his hands briskly, "but whatevah hit am will sho'ly cool dis kine ob er night! Had n't Ah better stan' heah ready ter grab hit back when you gib de wohd, befo' hit is plumb frizz?"

"Oh, it won't freeze that quickly! I'll tell you in plenty of time. It must have been

hard for you to accustom yourself to our severe Northern winters."

"Yassum, it wah, at fu'st. But den Ah allus wraps mahse'f up, as you kin see foh yo'self," and he waved his hand comprehensively toward his ulster, comforter, and hat. "Ah reckon mos' South'n folks has ter git used ter No'th'n ways when dey come up heah, jes' like No'th'n folks does when dey go Souf. Ah foun' dat out de fu'st yeah me an' Marse Calendah come up heah. De feeshin' off'n de pier wah mighty good in dem days, an' Ah nevah could git enough ob hit. Ah got 'quainted in dat way wid er generman dat uster feesh considahble hisse'f. Ah'd noticed de sof', low way he allus spoke, an' feelin' compliment'ry one day when Ah caught de bigges' old perch dat evah come outer de lake, Ah up an' tole dis generman dat he talk like er Southe'nah. You may know we is right proud ob de way we talk in de Souf. 'De troof is,' de gener-

man answah, 'Ah had er ter'ble spell ob diptheery las' wintah, an' hit played de ver' ole thundah wid mah voice!' Ah reckon dat wah 'bout de wuss thing evah happen ter me up heah! But ain't you ready foh dat pan, now?"

"Not yet. When it cools a little more I'll take it in to the doctor."

"Ah'se er great han' foh doctahs, ma'm —hadder lot ob dealin's wid 'em! Back in Hanovah County, Ah knowed er suttin feesician dat hahdly evah los' er case. Ob cou'se," he qualified carefully, "ob cou'se, when his patients gotter be er hunderd, er hunderd an' ten — anywhah 'roun' dat age — onct in er while dey'd sorter gib de old doctah de slip!"

"I'd call him a successful practitioner!"

"Yassum, he sho'ly wah — am *yit!* An' Doctah Fred'rick nigh on ter er hunderd hisse'f by now!"

"How do you account for it?"

"Well, ma'm, hits been er long time sence he tooken his die-plomah, an' maybe as doctahs go nowerdays he ain't up ter what we call de las' minute. But he make up foh technical 'ficiencies wid er fu'st-rate mixtuah ob hahd wuck an' prayah. He 's er man ob *faith,* ma'm!"

"You must be a man of faith, yourself!"

"Ah tries ter be! Good Book say ef we got de faith ob er little chile we kin cas' de Alleghany Mountains inter de sea. Hit nevah seem ter make no dif'rence ter Doctah Fred'rick wheddah hit wah er real mountain, er jes' one ob dese little ole mole-hills ob mis'ry — he allus gene'lly foun' er way ob disposin' ob hit. Dere 's er *powah* in prayah, ma'm!"

"I think you are right, Uncle Hilary."

"Yassum," he agreed with convincing modesty, "Ah mos' allus *is* right erbout mattahs ob faith, 'caze Ah is learn' ter cas' out doubt. De Lawd gwinter do what am

right, an' He gwinter show us de Way! Dat 's why Ah so suah de little sick chile in dar gwine ter git well. Little Miss an' Marse Calendah been prayin' foh her, too. Dey wah not aware ob mah observance, but all froo de dinnah ter-night Ah see 'em! De 'spression ob Marse Calendah's face, an' de glisten ob tears in Little Miss' eyes, wah prayah! Ah'se of'en noticed dat whatevah Marse Calendah go inter, he go pow'ful strong! Now, wid yo' permission, ma'm, Ah'll jes' straighten out dis little Chris'mus tree — make suah de candles am all right."

With nimble fingers, he adjusted the toys and tinsel. He then produced a match, and one by one, tiny stars of light shone forth from the branches of the tree. As he finished, he heard sounds from the sick-room. It was hard to recognize the low, anxious voice, which was that of Dr. Shepherd. He was calling Miss Lewis. Hilary gazed, perplexed, in its direction.

"Miss Lewis!"

"Yes, Doctor! Don't let this boil over, Uncle Hilary!"

"No'm, Ah won't." He took the spoon and began stirring, as the nurse stepped to the door.

"Has Dr. Warren returned?"

"Foh de Lawd' sake!" Hilary gasped, as he dropped the spoon to the floor. He heard Miss Lewis explaining that Dr. Warren was not yet back.

"Dat suttinly *soun'* like Doctah Shepherd's voice!" He picked up the spoon and resumed stirring.

"Let me know as soon as he comes."

"Yes, Doctor." She hurried back to the stove.

"We are ready now for the pan you set outside."

"Yassum; suttinly, ma'm!" Intent upon the matter at hand and forgetting even doctors, Hilary opened the window, as if

rescuing the survivors of an Arctic expedition. The north gale whistled into the room, as he grasped the utensil, which he jostled apprehensively. "Ser he'p me goodness, dem ingregiums ain' frizz arfter all!"

Miss Lewis left the room, and the old man drew his chair up to the stove, closing his eyes in meditation. Dr. Warren entering from the street, thought him asleep and shut the door gently. But when he turned, Hilary had risen.

"'Ebenin', Doctah Warren! 'Low me ter he'p you, sah!" But the physician was chilled and did not lay aside his overcoat. He relinquished the small parcels he carried, and advanced upon the stove, holding his hands in its warmth.

"Pahdon me, sah, but Doctah Shepherd desiahs yo' presence in de nex' room, when you is limbahed up yo' fingahs. Ah undahstan's de little sick chile am much improved. But Ah'll have ter arsk you ter 'scuse me

now, sah! Ah heahs Marse Calendah's car outside!"

With astonishing activity, he swaddled head and ears in his comforter. Almost merrily Dr. Warren watched him, and when he had gone, took up the small parcels from the table and started to join his associate. It had been a rare night for him, following a day of loss and gain. His nature, quickened rather than blunted by the life of sacrifice he had led, responded sympathetically to the conditions about him. Confidently surrendering the responsibility of his patient to the skilful young physician in whose discovery he had the faith of a child, he had the opportunity to review the events of the afternoon. The exultation he felt in the thought that little Jeannette would recover tempered slightly the belief that Elizabeth Bedford was lost to him. Strangely enough, his mind had not dwelt upon the part he himself had played in the affair. And, had he

not regained the friend of his boyhood — had not a child's life been saved! One of the packages he held in his hand contained a Christmas offering for the little patient. He had scribbled upon it a few words indicating that it was from Dr. Shepherd and himself. He even wondered what Jeannette would say when it was given to her. Then he smiled at the thought that for once in his busy life, he had ceased to be a man of science and was privileged to be for the time, at least, a man of sentiment and of dreams. He was smiling gratefully at the thought when the other physician met him. Warren was not prepared for what he saw. The splendid color of robust health had faded from Shepherd's face. His features were drawn with pain and disappointment, but his eyes were calm as if he, too, were bearing a cross up Calvary's rugged height. The surgeon's gown he wore fell in loose folds about him, as he stood in the doorway. He

drew Warren toward the room where the child lay.

"Come, Bob!" he whispered. "We may at least close those baby eyes—"

"You don't mean—"

"Yes. She is leaving us."

"But the discovery—your *discovery,* Shepherd!"

"Useless—worse than useless! If we only had the time I wasted!" Then a gleam of hope lighted his face. "Bob," he implored, "*you* can do something! You, of all the men on earth! Come and save her! *Save* her!"

The Fourth Physician

X

"YASSAH, Ah'se hadder lot of dealin's wid doctahs! 'Low me ter take yo' beavah, sah!" And Hilary extended his hand for the important-looking hat that Dr. Kindtlieb wore when he entered Mary Walker's home. "Ah reckon you is heeard ob Doctah Fred'rick — Doctah Fred'rick ob Hanovah County, sah?"

"No, I think not. It iss Dr. Shepherd I wish to find. Iss he here?"

"Oh, yassah, he heah! Ah'll jes' 'nounce yo' 'ribal, sah! Shall Ah mention any name in pa'tic'lah — er maybe he expectin' you?"

"My name is Kindtlieb — Dr. Kindtlieb."

"Name quite f'miliah, sah! Marse Calendah — de Cunnel — onct spoke ob you. 'Scuse me whilest Ah 'prise Doctah Shepherd you is heah." He tapped lightly on the door, which Miss Lewis opened. "Will you

kinely 'nounce ter Doctah Shepherd de 'ribal of Doctah — Doctah — oh, de famous *German* doctah, you know, ma'm!"

The two physicians in the tiny bedroom heard what Hilary said, and came to the door.

"Dr. Kindtlieb!" Shepherd exclaimed in astonishment.

"Not expecting me, I see! My blunder in taking the wrong card made it possible to join you here. And you haf Dr. Warren also with you!" Incidentally, he inquired of the sick child as if her recovery already was assured. Then he scanned their faces more closely. "Ah, I see it iss not so well with her!"

Shepherd looked steadily into his eyes.

"She is dying," he said.

"But the discovery! You haf not administered it?"

"Yes. It is a failure!"

"Will you see her, Dr. Kindtlieb?" War-

ren's eager voice begged, as he turned to the mighty foreigner.

"Ah, yes! Indeed, I will!" He took Warren's arm, and followed by the crushed and humiliated Shepherd they passed into the child's room.

It was not until they had gone that Hilary seemed to realize the hopelessness of the situation. He was stupefied with astonishment, and Miss Lewis found him shaking his head gloomily. But when he saw her, he brightened up in his quick, responsive way.

"Yassum; dat's de big German doctah. How did he git heah? *Prayah!*"

"But even he can do nothing now!"

"Ah reckon you is mistaken 'bout dat, ma'm! *You'll* see! De little sick chile gwine git well! Thousan' times de Lawd is answahed dis ole niggah's suppercations. You sho'ly ain't gittin' de idear He gwine turn no deaf ear ter Little Miss — let 'lone Marse Calendah!"

In a pitiably short while the three physicians, in single file, walked slowly from the scene of the heart-breaking, heart-gladdening combat as old and as mysterious as life itself.

"You were right, Dr. Shepherd — ah, yes, quite right! Nothing can save her now." Dr. Kindtlieb took up his hat, which Hilary had forgotten to hand him. "Come, my car iss waiting below! With haste, there yet iss time to catch the midnight train!"

"The midnight train?" Shepherd repeated vaguely.

"Yes. You haf done what you could for the child. It iss important that we take that train, else we will be too late to announce your discovery."

"I have no discovery to announce. *It is a failure.*"

"Ah, perhaps it iss not so bad as that! Come, let us go!"

A new and biting fear laid hold of War-

ren, as he watched closely the friend of his boyhood.

"We must fight it out, Livingston! Our duty lies *here!*"

Dr. Kindtlieb stood waiting. Shepherd made a step as if to join him, then looked beseechingly to Warren, and hesitated. But it was not until he saw the strange, compelling face of Calendar Bedford's house servant that he turned resolutely and began again his fight for the life of the child.

XI

AS Hilary had hinted to Miss Lewis, visitors at Colonel Bedford's house sometimes forgot that they had homes of their own. It was late when the last guest left that Christmas Eve, and neither Elizabeth nor her father waited to change the clothes they wore, but wrapping themselves warmly were soon on their way to Mary Walker's home in the city's back yard.

Hilary joined them at the foot of the rickety stairs.

"Ah suttinly glad you-all is come, Marse Calendah!" he cried, as he unbolted the car door.

"How is the child?" was his master's first question.

"Ah reckon de doctahs is considahble worried, sah. But *Ah* is suah she gwine git well." He followed them up the steps, and

with almost boyish earnestness directed their attention to the lighted tree.

"Well, sah!" and he stood admiring the gay shapeliness of the emblem of the Day of the Birth and the Day of the Death. "Well, sah, ain' dis bringin' de ole-time Chris'mus sperrit right inter dis place — dis place what need us Bedfordses er heap mo' dan Hanover County evah did need us!"

"Is Dr. Warren here?" Elizabeth asked him.

"Yassum, he heah. All ob 'em is in dat room ovah yandah wid de little sick chile an' her ma."

Once more he had forgotten the suffering of the world under the influence of the Tree.

"Marse Calendah, Ah 'spose you plumb fohgot dat Chris'mus summon you heah me preach de yeah befo' we come up heah? Well, sah, when Ah writ dat summon — " He paused and glanced apprehensively at Elizabeth. "Dat is ter say, when *Ah compose*

dat summon, Ah wah n't pos'tive hit wah soun' the-losophy. Sence dat time, Ah is learn' mo'."

The candles were still glowing bravely, and the old man stood behind the tree like a shadowy high priest at the altar of sacrifice.

"Yassah, Ah is suah now, as Ah 'low in dat summon, dat all de mis'ry ob slavery hit-se'f am mo' dan repaid by de Chris'mus tree, an' what us Af'icans — us niggahs, sah — is learn' ob de meanin' ob de Tree! Ah kin jes' see dem baby eyes er-shinin' when her ma light dese candles foh her in de mawnin'!"

Elizabeth smiled over to him, as she unpacked the hamper he had brought. It had been a night of surprises for Dr. Warren, and the picture they made as he came back into the room was not the least of them.

"How is little Jeannette?" Bedford asked, their greetings over.

"She is very low. I am sorry to say there is no hope for her now."

Elizabeth stood transfixed. Had not Hilary himself assured her that Jeannette would soon be well? Through the tears that sprang to her eyes, she looked at him as a child might look in demanding an explanation of something it could not understand.

"She is sinking rapidly," Warren continued.

"Father!" Elizabeth whispered. "If only I could have induced *him* to come!" Then she went back to her work at the hamper.

"She has been very unhappy that Dr. Shepherd was unwilling to come," Bedford explained to Warren.

"But he *did* come!"

"Shepherd? Is Livingston here?"

"Yes. He has made a gallant fight—a magnificent sacrifice! Let us save your daughter, for to-night at least, the disappointment of knowing that his discovery has failed!"

Elizabeth joined them, holding a brightly

colored little garment in her hand. In the light from Hilary's candles, Warren saw a tear fall upon it.

"Is there no hope at all?"

"I'm afraid not, Miss Bedford. She has had all that skill, and sympathy, and all that —love could offer!"

"Don' let 'em disoncourage you, Little Miss! Hit am true dat all three doctahs hab give her up, but dere am yet *Another!* De mantle ob His love an' mercy am sheltahin' dat little chile! Yassum, *de Fou'th Physician* hab taken de case!"

Poor, faithful servant, a few generations set apart from the darkness of the jungle, yet in hope and love and trust the richest of those within that wretched home that Death had marked!

XII

"WE are not keeping you from your patient, Dr. Warren?"

"Not at all, Colonel Bedford. For some reason, not clear to me, the physician who has charge of the case has asked to be alone with the child and her mother. I am to return to them at midnight."

Bedford consulted his watch.

"It is nearly midnight now."

"We don't need watches over here in our part of the city, to tell when midnight comes."

"No?"

"An unknown man with a soul has given to the little Mission Church in this desperate, struggling place a wonderful chime of bells. They ring at midnight." And he told them feelingly how little Jeannette used to beg him, upon his occasional visits, for fairy

stories — stories that were never complete unless the chimes had a part. His ingenuity exhausted, one day he had protested against doctoring up into modern form the old-fashioned tales of his youth, and graciously she had explained:

"'Ittle fairies isn't dot bells 'ike ours, 'tause *ours* is boo'fler 'an any music 'at ever was!"

As Hilary leaned forward over his tree, drinking deeply of every word, the chime pealed out the glad sweet story of the Birth in the Manger. At the first note, Dr. Warren bowed with professional brevity and answered its summons.

"Come, Elizabeth," Bedford said to his daughter, "we can do nothing more. I shall return to-morrow."

Hilary brought their wraps, but made no move himself to go.

"We are ready, Hilary."

"Ah hopes you kin spare me foh de res' ob de evenin', Marse Calendah. Ah'se gwine stick hit out right heah!"

Bedford nodded, as he and his daughter went out into the bitter night.

Hilary began to put out the candles on the tree. Several had been slowly extinguished when he paused in deep meditation, and lighted them all again. Then, as if answering a summons, he went confidently into the room where the child lay. Dr. Shepherd held the little patient tenderly in his arms. Love was his weapon now, and he knew its strength. But there is an Infinite Love that is stronger still.

The bells were yet ringing in a melody of annunciation—"Unto you a Child is Born"—when little Jeannette opened her baby eyes, and the smile of mystery fell lightly upon the wan, white face.

And so it happened that while the mother

stood mutely by, as she who stood at the foot of the Cross, the child's soul wandered out, high above the joyous bells, from the little body that Livingston Shepherd held tenderly in his arms.

XIII

CHRISTMAS morning was gray and cold. Hilary stood waiting in his master's breakfast room. All his life he had waited, patiently, loyally, devotedly. Clasping his hands behind the bent old back, he walked slowly to the eastern window and looked out upon the bleakness of the lake. Presently he returned to the table and rearranged the sprays of holly at the two plates.

"All mah life Ah is put mah trus' in You, deah Lawd!" he murmured. "But I reckon dere am things hit wah nevah intended dat Ah should know."

The wide, old-fashioned door swung open, and Calendar Bedford followed Elizabeth into the room. He glanced into the face of his servant as he stood at the master's chair ready to do him honor when he, in turn, had seated his daughter. He noticed the old

man's tired, worn features, and his heart sank. Somehow he had counted on Hilary to comfort him that day.

"Merry Christmas, Hilary!" he cried with forced good cheer.

"Same ter you, sah!" To be near his master had always raised the old man's spirits. "Chris'mus gift, Little Miss!" he called across the table, true to the old Southern custom.

Several times during breakfast, Bedford seemed about to speak upon a subject of moment.

"My child," he now began, when something directed his attention to Hilary. His black face was illuminated as if on this desolate Christmas morning the sun had risen in Calendar Bedford's breakfast room.

"De Lawd be praise'! De blessed, blessed Lawd!"

Bedford hurried to his side.

"Hilary! What is it, Hilary?"

At first his servant did not seem to hear; then he was overwhelmed with embarrassment.

"Fohgive me, Marse Calendah!" he begged. "Yo' ole niggah plumb fohgot hisse'f! What kin Ah bring you, sah?" He caught up the tray — symbol of his servitude — and again was the deferential houseman.

"Hilary," Bedford said slowly, as though measuring each word. "You are the best man I ever knew!"

"*You* fohgits yo'se'f, too, Marse Calendah!" he protested in his low, laughing voice, but realizing that he had been enthroned — his whole life crowned — in one brief sentence. Then he hurried from the room.

"Elizabeth," Bedford resumed, "there is something I must tell you; you should have known it last night. It is about Dr. Shepherd — about Livingston."

"Not now!" she begged, as she rose from the table. "I could not bear it!"

"You are wrong, my child. It will give you happiness to know."

"Nothing can do that!" And she quickly left him.

XIV

IT was nearly noon when Elizabeth heard the sound of Hilary's voice, and, seeking her father, followed it. She was well within the living-room before she realized that Dr. Shepherd was there.

"Yassah, Marse Calendah gone ovah on de Wes' Side! But Little Miss is heah."

"Do you think she would be willing to see me?"

"See you? Cou'se she see you! Ef evah she gwine be proud ter see you, hit's right now! Why, heah she is!"

"Elizabeth, will you give me a few minutes?" It was as if a different man had spoken.

"I thought you upon your way to New York," she answered coldly.

"I—I did not go."

She shrank from him.

"You were here, and you let her die!"

She started to leave, but Hilary stood squarely in the doorway. Clearly he did not intend that she should pass.

"*She is dead!* You could have saved her!"

He bowed his head.

"Perhaps; if only I had gone when you asked me — when I should have gone!"

"Pahdon me, Little Miss; kin Ah arsk you a question?" Hilary no longer stood at the door. "Dere's sech er lot ob things been happ'nin' heah lately, maybe ole niggah ain' seein' jes' straight! Wah n't you ovah on de Wes' Side wid Marse Calendah an' me, an' de res' ob 'em, las' night, or dis mawnin' — er whenevah midnight am? Hit suttinly 'peared like ter me you wah wid us all at little Jeannette's ma's!"

"*You* were there!" Shepherd exclaimed, turning to Elizabeth.

"Yassah; her an' Marse Calendah an' me! All froo de long night Ah wondahed why de Lawd hide His face from us, an' hit wah not till Marse Calendah come down dis mawnin' dat Ah suddenly see de meanin' ob hit all!" He felt that an explanation was due to Dr. Shepherd. "You see, sah, Marse Calendah allus did somehow stim'late dis ole niggah's faith! None ob us had 'zactly undahstood dat case. De Blessed Physician reach' out His han' in dat po' little home las' night, an' de sick wah healed!"

"She died!" Elizabeth's voice was deep with emotion, as she looked steadily into Dr. Shepherd's face.

"Yassum," Hilary agreed simply. "He tooken de chile — jes' like He intended ter all de time! She's wid Him dis blessed Chris'mus mawnin'! No man on earf' — not eben Doctah Fred'rick hisse'f — evah wucked mo' faithful dan Doctah Shepherd did!"

"Can't you see, sah? *You* wah de patient, an' you am *healed!*"

[Page 143]

"What do you mean?" Elizabeth demanded earnestly.

"Ah means dat Doctah Shepherd wah wid us in dat mis'able place las' night, strivin' wid all ob his skill—wid all ob his heart—ter save de chile. Ef hit hadder been intended dat she be spared, de miracle would hab been entrusted ter him. But De Marstah wanted her! As He caught de sweet little sperrit ter His breast, He reach fo'th His han' an' *heal de sick!*"

Shepherd seemed to be looking out through the wreckage of his soul into the negro's inspired eyes.

"Can't you see, sah? *You* wah de patient, an' you am *healed!* You is made *de one great discov'ry!*"

The young physician straightened himself, like one who adjusts his shoulders to a new and welcome burden. Then he bowed his head as if a benediction were being said, and with closed eyes groped his way to Hil-

ary Brooks. Reverently he caught the hard, black hand in his, and a sob — the sob of a strong, repentant soul — rose from his heart.

Elizabeth's face caught the glory of the light her father's servant had seen.

THE END